

240 Similarly, during this time she must be careful where she walks. She
 14 can ruin a crop by walking through it. But, of course, in this case, she would suffer with the other members of the family.

From early childhood the girl is brought up as an agricultural labourer. There was no class of women divorced from the soil. The only class whose labour in agriculture were lightened were the women who belonged to the divining cult of "SEWE." Sewe is the spirit of divination and is supposed to have descended on those who have been delirious in illness. The delirium is the sign of possession. The devotees of the cult are mainly women, and they are a fairly common sight as they go about their occupation. They are skilled beggars as well as diviners. With their bodies fastened with strings of beads, shells, bells and other barbaric ornaments, they pass from house to house, and standing with their bodies leaning forward supported by a hand resting on a short stick they sing songs of the countryside and are rewarded by presents of small baskets of grain. In this way women who have been ill are enabled to help to replenish the grain stores, which have probably run low during the illness.

241 Gradually a change is coming over the life of the women, due to
 177 white influence. Ploughing by the men with teams of oxen, is setting women free for other tasks. This movement is by no means widespread, but it has begun, and its effect on the women has been great. 252 Even if the husband has no team and plough himself, many wives do not rest content until the husband has hired a plough owner to come along and plough up the land. It is not unusual for ploughs to be taken 15 miles for this purpose. Again, the use of hand mills of the "Colonial" type, is easing women of much labour at the grind stones. There are much more common than ploughs, probably there are twenty mills for every plough in use. This is partly accounted for by the fact that the mills are turned by hand power, not by oxen. At this labour girls and women take their share, but whereas you would never see a man down on his knees at the grindstone, you do see them turning a mill. New activities are employing the time of many women, and those who have learned to knit or make palm mats in recent years are rapidly increasing in numbers.

CHILD LABOUR:

657 Generally speaking, from early childhood, all are required to make some contribution to the activities of the home. Girls for the fields, and boys for herding, is the broad division of labour, though the boys also lead a hand in the fields, and, very occasionally, a girl or woman may be seen herding. With the opening up of avenues of wage-earning to the boys on coffee and tea estates, and in other forms of employment, the male child is being made by impoverished parents to make his contribution to the family life.

THE RELUCTANT LUO

IV

After Mr. Onyango had spoken, others said their piece, and I asked the opinions of some of the women, who will never speak unless they are directly asked. One replied, through an interpreter, in these words:

I was against consolidation. My own land was fertile and I did not want to lose it and have other land not as good as mine. I tried to persuade my husband. We had many arguments, and the peace of our house was destroyed. At last I saw that I must give in if our home was to become peaceful again. We exchanged gardens, and then I saw that the new gardens were as fertile as my own. Now the men are helping women on the land and this is something that has never happened before. Men and women are working together. This is because the men see that there is money in growing crops and that bigger crops will make them rich.

A second woman—both were middle-aged—spoke after her.

I was not of that opinion. I wanted consolidation before it came here. If you have land near your home, you can work to improve it. If it is a long way off, you cannot put on manure. I understood the value of manure by seeing crops grown by the Better Farmers. Before, I had four *shamba* and one was over a mile away. Now they are all together and near my home. There is only one difficulty. Our custom is, when a son gets married, he leaves his father's *shamba* to start one of his own. I do not want to break this custom, but now I have a married son and there is nowhere for him to go.

And a third woman, rather older, added her piece.

I was in favour of consolidation too. The boundaries of land have caused many disputes and quarrels amongst us. When there are fixed boundaries, these quarrels fade away. So I wanted consolidation before it came, and my husband agreed. Now I can farm properly and put manure on the *shamba*; we have a shed for the cattle to stay in at night. Besides that, my husband employs two men. When he goes away I supervise them and the work is not so hard. Men and women never worked together before. Now they do, and this is a big thing.